

**RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SUMMARY: 212 DUNDAS STREET EAST**

212 Dundas Street East: Heritage Preservation Services, 2016

**HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY**

<b>Key Date</b>	<b>Historical Event</b>
1798	Park Lot 5 is patented to David William Smith
1818	William Allan purchases Park Lot 5 as the setting of his “Moss Park” estate, which is accessed by “Allan’s Lane” (Sherbourne Street)
1853	After previously acquiring the north part of Park Lot 5 (1845), George William Allan inherits the balance of his father’s property, retaining the private gardens (the future City-owned park named Allan Gardens)
1854	Allan subdivides the portion of his estate bounded by “Wilton Crescent” (future Dundas Street East), George Street, Gerrard Street East and Sherbourne Street (it is afterward registered as Plan 150)
1858	Boulton’s Atlas indicates that the subject property remains vacant
1872 Jan	Henry Tasker purchases Lot 4 on the northeast corner of Wilton Crescent and George Street
1874 Apr	According to the tax assessment rolls, Henry Tasker resides on the subject property in a 2½-storey brick house with two brick wings
1875	Tasker is first listed in the city directory on Wilton Crescent
1876 Aug	Ralph Kerr Burgess purchases Tasker’s property
1880	The house form building with its additions is shown on the first Goad’s Atlas for Toronto
1882 Apr	Lucy Livingstone acquires the subject property, retaining it for 30 years
1884	The fire insurance atlas shows the further northward extension of the house
1894	A decade later, the atlas indicates that part of the rear wing of the house has

	been removed for the construction of row houses on George Street (the buildings remain extant at 279½-283½ George)
1912 Mar	James Taylor Benor purchases the subject property for \$14,250, and acquires two mortgages the next year
1913 Apr	Building permit #1427 is issued to Benor for a three-storey “addition to rooming house” on the northeast corner of Wilton Crescent and George Street, identifying Symons and Rae as the architects
1913 Dec	Benor reaches an agreement with the City of Toronto regarding the projecting canopy on the entrance to “Wilton Court Apartments”
1914 July	Benor is identified in the tax assessment rolls as the owner of a “private hotel” at Wilton and George, which is valued at \$35,000
1914	The city directory of 1915 (with information dating to the previous year) records the Wilton Court “apartments” at 2-10 Wilton Crescent
1915	The next city directory (published in 1916 with 1915 data) records the Wilton Court Private Hotel, which is also advertised in the September 28 <sup>th</sup> edition of “The Globe”
1923	The apartment hotel is illustrated on the last update to Goad’s Atlas on “Dundas Crescent,” showing the retention of parts of the Henry Tasker House at the north end
1927	Benor transfers the property to his daughter, Nellie Brennan, who retains the site until 1945
1954	The property is recorded in the City Directory for 1955 (reflecting information from the previous year) as the Wilton Court Hotel
1959	The Westover Hotel first occupies the site (according to the City Directory for 1960)
1980	The property is sold to Stage 212 Incorporated, incorporating the Stage 212 adult entertainment venue, as well as the Fly By Night lesbian bar
1985-1986	Filmores Hotel is first recorded in the City Directory at 212 Dundas Street East
2012	City Council authorizes the study of the Garden District as a potential Heritage Conservation District, with the property at 212 Dundas Street East included within the study area boundaries

The property at 212 Dundas Street East is located in the Toronto neighbourhood now known as the Garden District. The land was originally subdivided as part of the series of 100-acre Park Lots north of York (Toronto) and awarded to associates of the provincial government as the setting of country estates (Image 2). George Allan acquired Park Lot 5 and opened Allan’s Lane (Sherbourne Street) to access his Moss Park estate. His son and heir, George William Allan retained the private grounds that formed the nucleus of today’s Allan Gardens when he subdivided the estate for residential development in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Image 3). Nearly 20 years passed before the parcel on the northeast corner of present-day Dundas Street West and George Street was purchased by merchant Henry Tasker, whose 2½-storey house was in place by early 1874 (Image 4). Described in the tax assessment rolls as having a mansard roof and two brick wings, the dwelling was illustrated in a bird’s eye view of the city in 1876 (Image 9). From 1882-1912, the subject property was owned by Lucy C. Livingstone and her trustees. The development of and changes to the property are traced for nearly a century on fire insurance atlases, including those shown below (Images 5-8).

James Taylor Benor (1870-1941) purchased the property at present-day 212 Dundas Street East in 1912 and the next year acquired a building permit to “alter rooming house” (Image 10). The alterations consisted of the addition of the present three-storey building, which was first described in archival records as an apartment house named “Wilton Court.” The project was typical of the “apartment boom” in Toronto in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the rush to construct the first multi-unit buildings in the city was met with a short-term ban on their construction in 1912. Property owners got around the restrictions by altering existing structures.<sup>1</sup> For the Wilton Court project, Benor engaged local architects Symons and Rae, who were particularly known for the innumerable projects the firm undertook in the city’s upscale neighbourhoods, including apartment houses in Parkdale and the Annex. By 1914, the subject property was identified as the “Wilton Court Private Hotel” and, according to an advertisement in The Globe, was one of “two modern hotels” on the street operated by Benor (Image 10).<sup>2</sup> This type of accommodation operated as an apartment building, but provided a dining room for residents, as well as room service for meals and housekeeping. The property with the Wilton Court Hotel and incorporating the Tasker House was retained by Benor’s family until 1945. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it continued to operate as a hotel and, since the 1980s, has been occupied by Filmores, a locally known adult entertainment venue (Image 12).

The Wilton Court Hotel has features from Edwardian Classical style that was popular for all building types in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and identified by the classical detailing with band courses and quoins, the symmetrical placement of the openings, and the uniform red brick cladding with stone highlights. The design was influenced by its setting on the irregularly-shaped lot created by the curve on Dundas Street, east of George Street, and highlighted by the rounded corner adjoining the intersection. Attached to the north end of the Wilton Court Hotel, the surviving portions of the Henry Tasker House retain the mansard roofs, decorative brickwork and elaborate flourishes that are signatures of the Second Empire style of the late Victorian era. The house form building is viewed from the east and west where it stands out with its contrasting yellow brickwork and intricate window detailing.

Contextually, the property at 212 Dundas Street East anchors the northeast corner of George Street as it curves eastward to Sherbourne Street. North of the subject properties, George Street contains on the east side a series of low-rise house form buildings ranging from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that are designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. This group contains a residential building dating to 1858 that was converted 30 years later to the Fegan Boys’ Home as part of the transition of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Manhattan Apartments at 628 Church Street and the Gloucester Mansions at 69 Gloucester Street are other examples in the neighbourhood where low-rise apartment houses retain portions of house form buildings (the latter properties are included on the City’s Heritage Register)

<sup>2</sup> The Royal Cecil Hotel, located on the north side of Dundas Street East between Jarvis and Mutual streets is no longer extant

area from a residential enclave to a mixed-used neighbourhood with many institutional buildings.<sup>3</sup>

EVALUATION: Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed by the Province of Ontario for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

<b>Design or Physical Value</b>	
i. rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	<b>X</b>
ii. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	<b>X</b>
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	<b>N/A</b>

<b>Historical or Associative Value</b>	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	<b>N/A</b>
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	<b>X</b>
iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	<b>X</b>

<b>Contextual Value</b>	
i. important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	<b>X</b>
ii. physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	<b>X</b>
iii. landmark	<b>X</b>

The property at 212 Dundas Street has design value as the setting of the Wilton Court Hotel, a three-storey commercial building that was designed as a low-rise apartment house with features of the popular Edwardian Classical style of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Wilton Court Hotel displays the sombre red brick, the symmetrical placement of openings, and the classically-inspired quoins and band course identified with Edwardian Classicism. Its design incorporates significant portions of the Henry Tasker House, which is distinguished by its Second Empire styling with the mansard roofs and elaborate decorative detailing.

The associative value of the property at 212 Dundas Street East is through its contribution to the development and evolution of the residential neighbourhood that, beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, opened east of Yonge Street along the major corridors of Church, Jarvis and Sherbourne streets. This area originally housed high-end residential buildings in the popular styles of the day (including the Henry Tasker House) and, after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, welcomed the city's first low-rise apartment buildings that included the Wilton Court Hotel.

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<sup>3</sup> In the immediate neighbourhood, these included the Toronto Boys' Home (which is no longer extant) and the residential buildings that housed the Fegan Boys' Home at 295 George and the adjoining Salvation Army receiving home at 297 George

The Wilton Court Hotel is valued for its historical association with the Toronto architectural firm of Symons and Rae, which designed it as an apartment building incorporating portions of the Henry Tasker House. Symons and Rae were noted for the breadth of the firm's commissions in the city's high-end neighbourhoods, including the design of low-rise walk-up apartment houses that supported the city's "apartment boom" in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Contextually, the property at 212 Dundas Street contributes to the character of the neighbourhood now known as the Garden District, which developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as an upscale community adjoining Allan Gardens where Toronto's community leaders resided. The area first attracted single family homes, among them the Henry Tasker House, before many of the larger parcels were infilled with newer construction that included walk-up apartment buildings such as the Wilton Court Hotel. The subject property is also historically, visually and physically linked to its prominent setting anchoring the northeast corner of Dundas and George streets where the Wilton Court Hotel was designed to address the curve in the street that is a prominent urban design feature in the Garden District neighbourhood.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The physical characteristics of the property at 212 Dundas Street East are:

### Wilton Court Hotel

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building on the northeast corner of Dundas Street East and George Street
- The scale, form and massing of the building, which extends three stories above a raised base, with the southwest corner rounded to address the curve of Dundas Street, east of George Street
- The materials, with the red brick cladding and the stone trim
- The flat roofline (the cornice has been removed)
- The main entrance, which is placed on the southwest corner
- The raised base where the flat-headed window openings have been filled in (the stone sills remain on the west and east elevations)
- Above the base on the east, south and west elevations, the symmetrically-placed flat-headed window openings with the stone lintels and sills
- The decorative detailing, with the stone band courses on the base and between the second and third stories

The rear (north) elevation, which adjoins the south elevation of the Henry Tasker House, is visible at the east end.

### Henry Tasker House

- The setback, placement and orientation of the house form building on the east side of George Street, north of Dundas Street East

- The scale, form and massing of the 2½-storey house form building with the two-storey rear (north) wing
- The materials, with the red brick cladding, the contrasting yellow brick detailing, and the stone and brick trim
- The mansard roofs on the house and wing, with the dormers on the roof covering the house
- On the side (east and west) elevations, the round-arched window openings, with the stone hood moulds and corbelled sills on the house, and the brick voussoirs on the wing where the second-storey openings have corbelled sills
- The decorative detailing on the east and west elevations, with the band courses, the quoins and, on the wing, the corbelled brickwork

The south elevation adjoins Wilton Court, and the north elevation is concealed by the neighbouring buildings.

## SUMMARY

Following research and evaluation according to Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 212 Dundas Street East meets the criteria under all three categories of design, associative and contextual values. Designed by Toronto architects Symons and Rae, the building was completed in 1913 as a small-scale apartment house and afterward operated as the Wilton Court Private Hotel. The building is valued as an early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building that, with its Edwardian Classical styling and rounded corner, addresses the curve on Dundas Street East (originally Wilton Crescent) between George and Sherbourne streets. Incorporating portions of the Henry Tasker House (1873-74) at the rear (north), the complex contributes to the character of the Garden District, which originated as a high-end residential enclave adjoining Allan Gardens. More recently known as Filmores Hotel, with its setting and rooftop sign, the property at 212 Dundas Street East is a local landmark.

## SOURCES

Archival Photographs, City of Toronto Archives (individual citations with Images)  
 Assessment Rolls, St. David's Ward, 1873-1892, and Ward 2, Division 2, 1893 ff.  
 Boulton, Atlas of the City of Toronto, 1858  
 Building Permit #1427, April 14, 1913, City of Toronto Archives  
 City of Toronto Directories, 1870 ff.  
 Dennis, Richard, "Apartment Housing in Canadian Cities, 1900-1940," Urban History Review, March 1998  
 -----, "Interpreting the apartment house: modernity and metropolitanism in Toronto, 1900-1930, Journal of Historical Geography," Vol. 20, 1994  
The Evening Independent, August 13, 1941 (obituary)  
The Globe, September 28, 1915 (advertisement), February 20, 1928 (wedding announcement), March 24, 1959 (obituary)  
 Goad's Atlases, 1880-1923  
 Gross, Bird's Eye View of the City of Toronto, 1876

Lundell, Liz, The Estates of Old Toronto, 1997

MacNamara, Jane, "Why is Dundas Street So Crooked," Toronto Tree, May-June 1997

Marshall, Sean, "The Many Streets of Dundas," October 15, 2011

[www.spacing.ca/toronto/2011/10/15/the-many-streets-of-dundas](http://www.spacing.ca/toronto/2011/10/15/the-many-streets-of-dundas)

McHugh, Patricia, Toronto Architecture: A City Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1989

Plan, Moss Park Estate, 1858, Toronto Public Library, Item r-2

Underwriters' Survey Bureau Atlas, 1921 revised to 1943

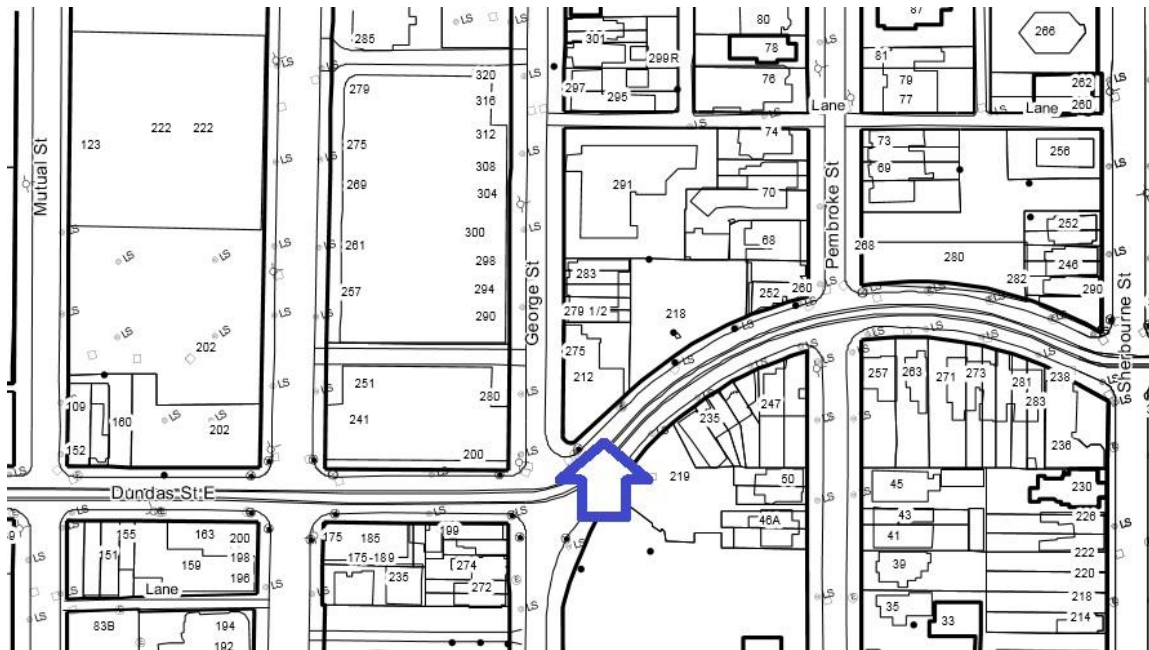
"William Limbery Symons," Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950,

<http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1345>

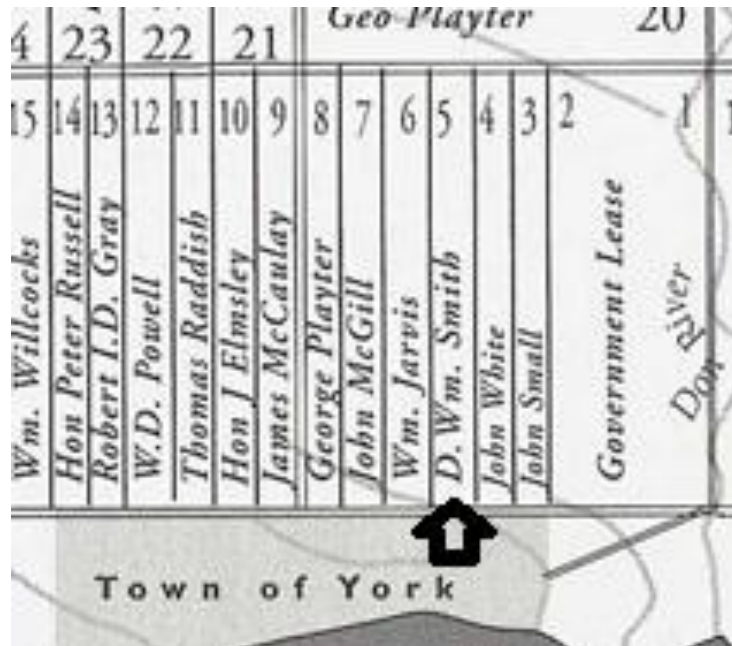
"William Rae," entry in Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950,

<http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/534>

IMAGES - The **arrows** mark the subject property. All maps are oriented with north on the top.

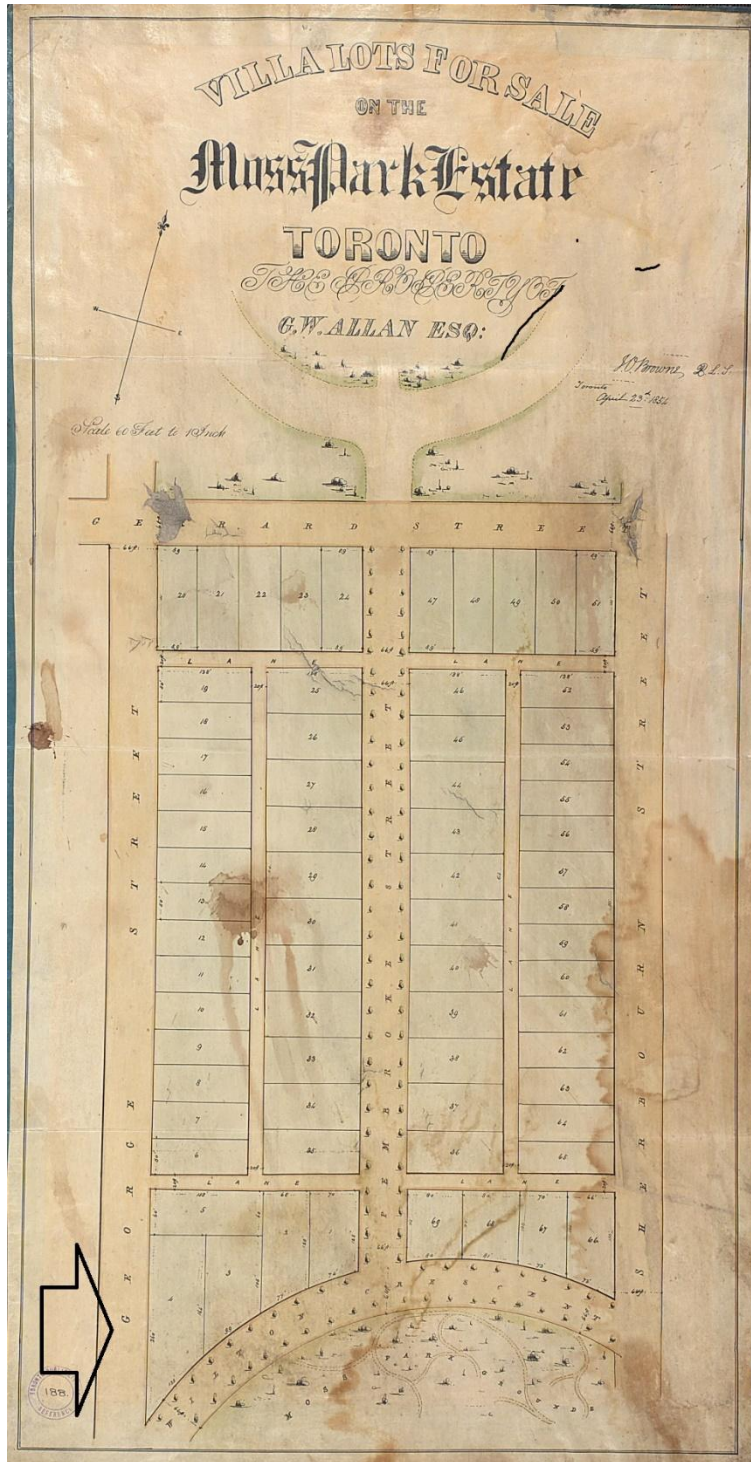


1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the subject property on the northeast corner of Dundas Street East and George Street.

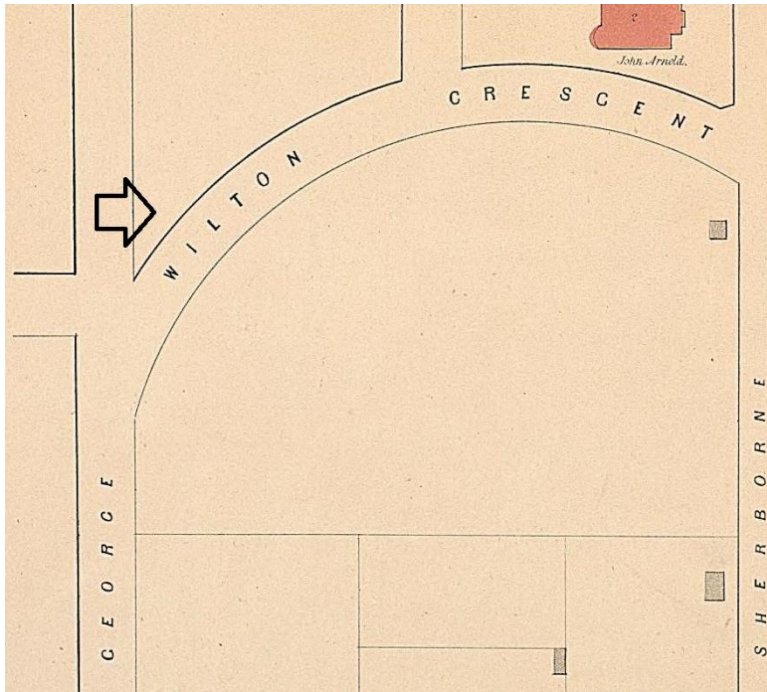


2. Map, Park Lots: Park Lot 5 was originally patented by Smith and acquired afterward by George Allan where the subject property was later developed.

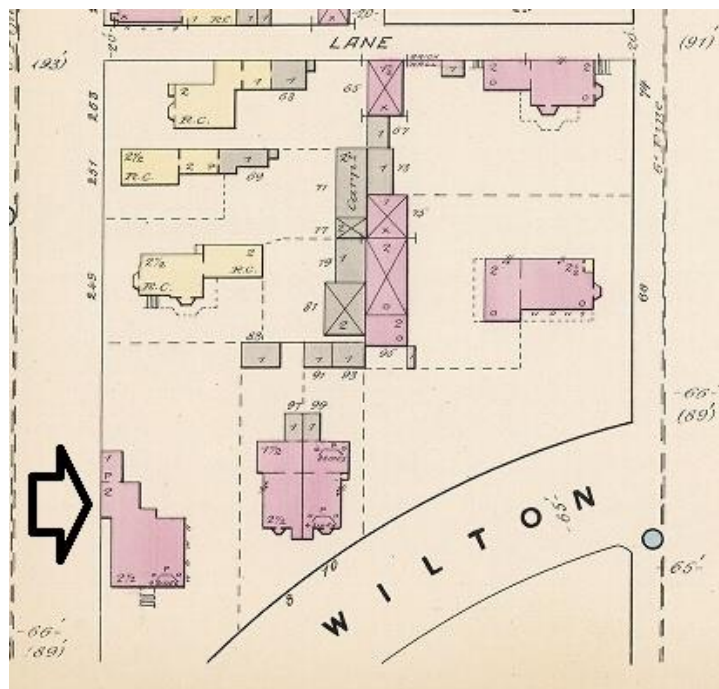




3. Plan, Moss Park Estate, 1854: showing the subdivision of part of Allan's estate south of Allan Gardens, with the south edge bounded by the curved Wilton Crescent (present-day Dundas Street East) (Toronto Public Library, r-2)

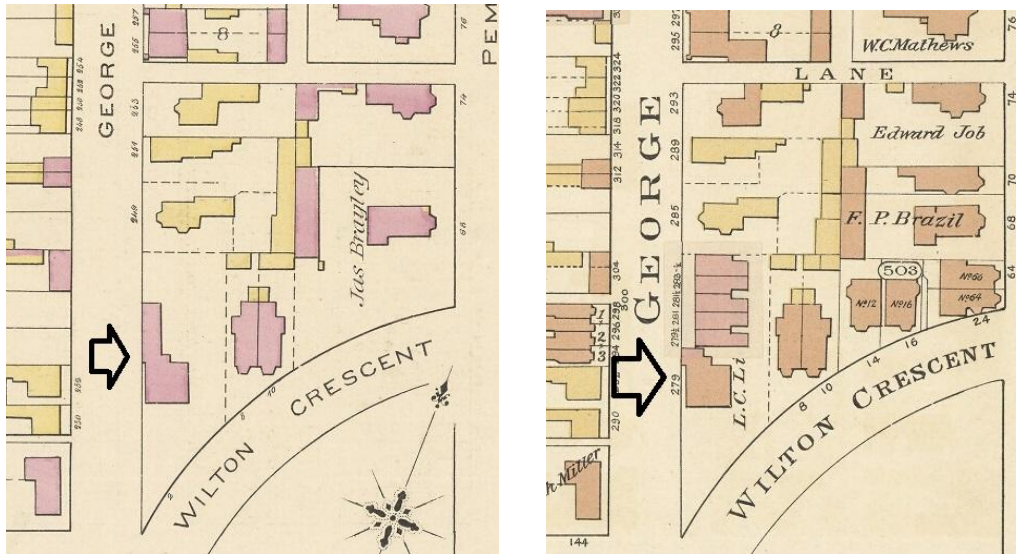


4. Boulton's Atlas, 1858: the subject property is undeveloped on the first fire insurance atlas depicting Toronto.

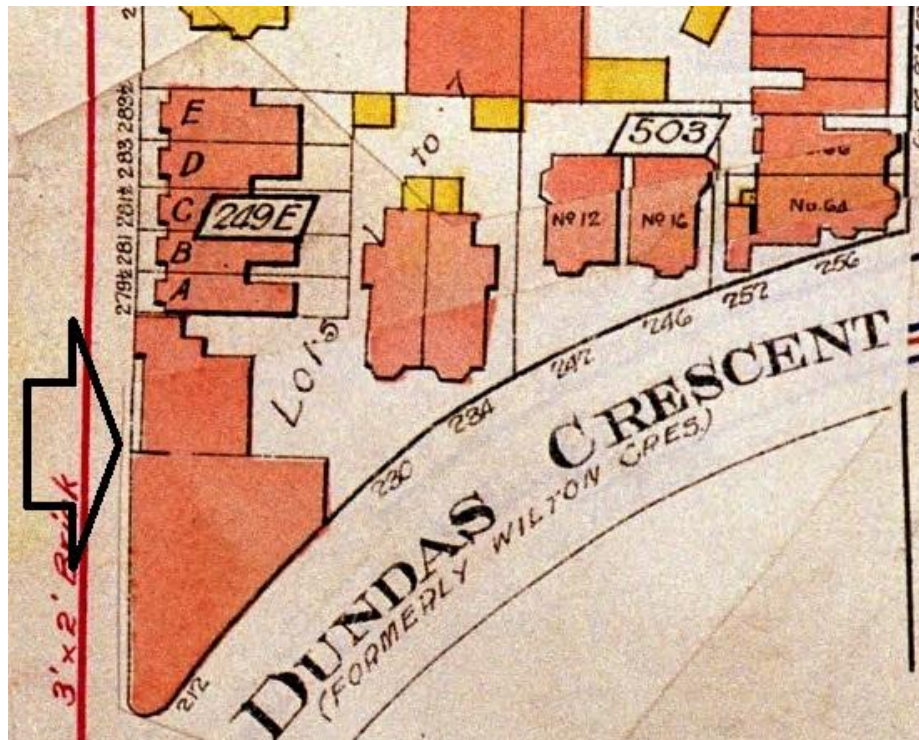


5. Goad's Atlas, 1880: the inaugural Goad's Atlas illustrates the house completed for Henry Tasker in 1874.

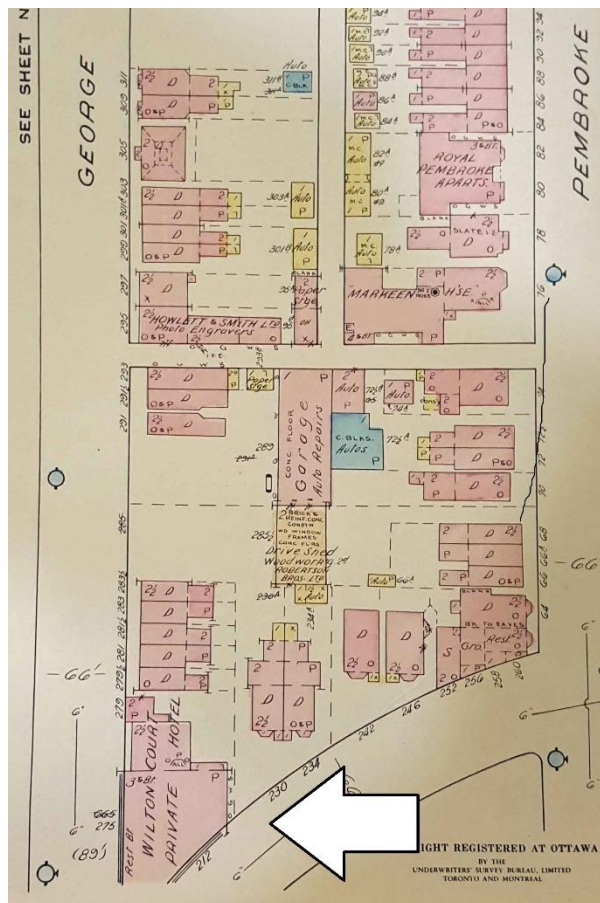




6. Goad's Atlases, 1884 and 1894: the 1884 atlas (left) indicates that the house form building has been extended to the north while, a decade later, the atlas (right) illustrates the removal of the extension to facilitate the construction of row houses on George Street.



7. Goad's Atlas, 1910 revised to 1923: the update to the atlas shows the south addition that was designed as apartments and operated as an apartment hotel, which retained the Henry Tasker House at the rear (north).



8. Underwriters’ Survey Bureau Atlases, 1921 revised to 1943 (above) and 1964 (below): the atlases illustrate the “Wilton Court Private Hotel” on the subject property.





9. Gross's Bird's Eye View of Toronto, 1876: the Henry Tasker House with its mansard roof is depicted on the northeast corner of Wilton Crescent and George Street.

**BUILDING PERMIT**

DEPARTMENT OF CITY ARCHITECT AND SUPERINTENDENT OF BUILDING

No. 1427 Toronto, April 14 1913

Permission is hereby granted to Mr. Mr. Benor to erect 3 storey sub addition to rooming house on the Wilton + George side of Wilton + George near Wilton Crescent in Limit in accordance with plans and specifications approved by this department.

Architect Symons + Rae Estimated Cost, \$ 40,000  
 Builder \_\_\_\_\_ Permit Fee, \$ 21.75

**NOTICE**—To obtain permission to occupy the street or sidewalk during construction, present this permit at the office of the City Engineer.

This permit is granted on the express condition that the said building, etc., shall in all respects conform to the provisions to by-Law 4801 of the City of Toronto, regulating the construction of buildings, etc.  
 This permit lapses on the expiry of six months from the date issue unless active work under it is sooner commenced.

*[Signature]*  
 City Architect and Superintendent of Building

10. Building Permit 1427, April 14, 1913: issued to J. T. Benor for the three-storey “addition to rooming house” and identifying Symons and Rae as the architects for the project.

**HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS.**

Toronto.

**C**OMFORTABLE HOME—INGLEWOOD—  
295 Jarvis; moderate charges; phone.

**M**ARLBOROUGH HOTEL — THE MOST  
elegant private hotel in Canada; cul-  
sine unexcelled. 214 Jarvis street, Toronto.

**P**IVATE HOTEL — ELEGANTLY FUR-  
NISHED — new; everything modern;  
running water in rooms; numerous bath-  
rooms; high-class table; rates moderate.  
Pensax Court, 71 Grenville street, Toronto.

**"ROYAL CECIL"**—CORNER OF WILTON  
and Jarvis—phone Main 7650; "Wilton  
Court," corner Wilton and George, phone  
Main 1970; two new modern hotels, under  
one management; 150 rooms, 150 baths. J.  
T. Benor, proprietor.

**T**HE "ISABELLA" PRIVATE HOTEL,  
corner Isabella and Sherbourns streets,  
recently opened; offers rooms with baths,  
single and en suite, at reasonable rates;  
modern appointments; cafe. Telephone  
Adelaide 256.

11. Newspaper Advertisement, The Globe, September 28, 1915: advertising the new "Wilton Court" hotel.

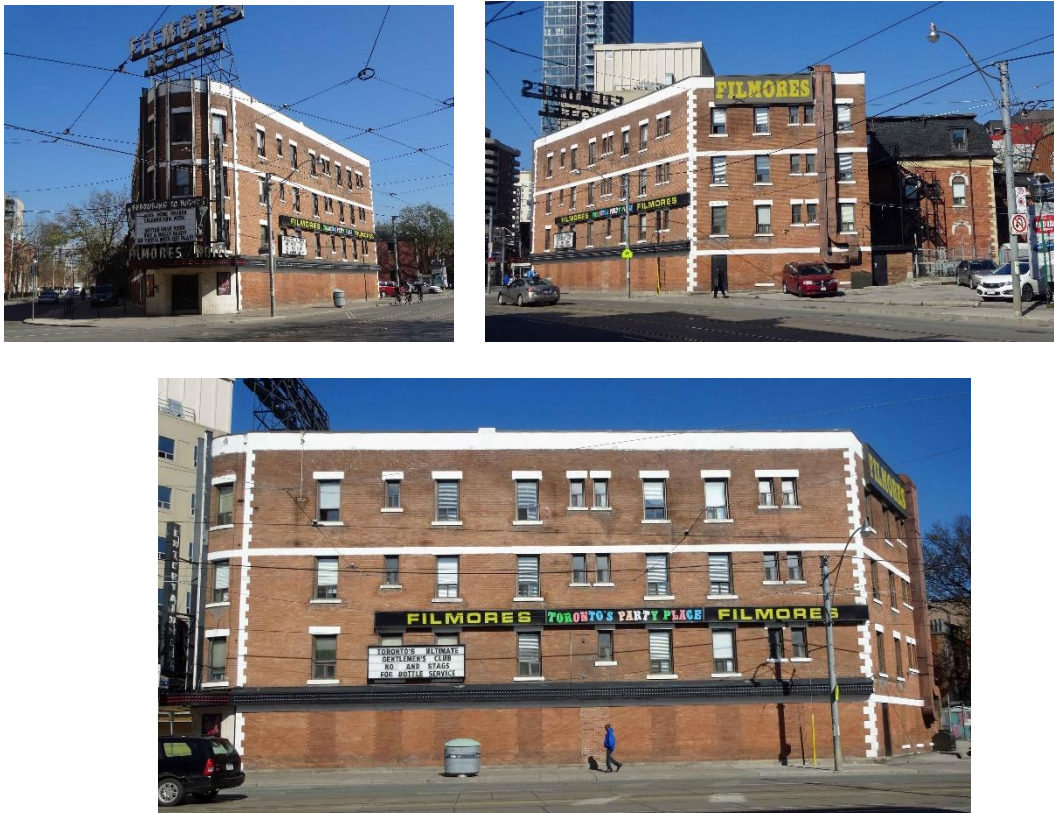


12. Archival Photograph, Dundas and George, 1923: following the extension of Dundas Street east of Yonge Street and the renaming of Wilton Crescent as "Dundas Crescent," the subject building with the "Private Hotel" sign is shown on the left (City of Toronto Archives, Series 71, Item 2538).





13. Archival and Contemporary Photographs, Filmores Hotel, 1980s and undated: showing the entrance adjoining the northeast corner of Dundas and George streets (left) and the rooftop sign (right) (City of Toronto Archives, Series 1465, Item 7, and [www.tripadvisor.ca](http://www.tripadvisor.ca)).



14. Current Photographs, 212 Dundas Street East, 2016: showing the southwest corner and the south elevation (above left), the south and east elevations of the hotel with the house behind (above right), and the extended south elevation on Dundas Street East (below) (Heritage Preservation Services).



15. Current Photographs, 212 Dundas Street East, 2016: showing the west elevations of the Wilton Court Hotel and the Henry Tasker House on George Street (above), and the east elevation and part of the rear (north) wall of the hotel where it adjoins the house and wing (below) (Heritage Preservation Services).





16. Current Photographs, 212 Dundas Street East, 2016: view of George Street and the west elevations of the Henry Tasker House (above), and the stone detailing on one of the window openings on the east elevation (below) (Heritage Preservation Services).